MOSES,

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD.

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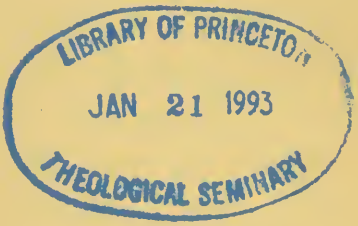

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Van Dyke, Henry J.
Moses, the servant of
the Lord; a sermon preach-
ed in the First Presbyterian
Church, Brooklyn, N.Y. on
Sabbath, August 15th, 1858.

MOSES, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD.

A SERMON

Preached in the First Presbyterian Church,

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

On Sabbath, August 15th, 1858,

BY REV. HENRY J. VAN DYKE, PASTOR.

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1858.

Brooklyn, *August 20th*, 1858.

Rev. H. J. Van Dyke:

Dear Sir:—Believing that the cause of Christ may be promoted by the publication of the discourse you delivered to your people on Sabbath morning last, we earnestly desire you will furnish a copy for that purpose.

We shall cherish its possession as another of the delightful mementoes of your ministry among us.

Very truly yours,

J. LEDYARD,
HENRY BUTLER,
HENRY SHELDON,
W. S. DUNHAM,
JNO. SCRYMSER,
HENRY S. HILL,
GEO. S. SAMPSON,
JOHN LAIDLAW

Brooklyn, *August 23d*, 1858.

To Messrs. Ledyard, Butler, Sheldon, and others.

Gentlemen—My discourse was prepared with an honest purpose to promote the cause of Christ. If in your judgment its publication will in any degree secure that end, I ought not to withhold it from you.

Yours truly in Christ,

HENRY J. VAN DYKE.

MOSES,

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD.

DEUTERONOMY 34, 5–8.

"So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended."

THIS record is sublime in its simplicity, and full of profitable truth. It describes in few, but weighty words, the death, burial, character, and public estimation of the most illustrious of the sons of men. Each of these topics would furnish rich materials for a long discourse, of which I now propose to give you only a hasty sketch.

I. THE DEATH OF MOSES

1. *Was the exact fulfillment of a divine decree.*

He "died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord."

Go back in the history to the place so significantly called the waters of Meribah, "because the children of Israel strove with the Lord." The stream that had followed them from the rock of Rephidim, during so many years of their wandering (thus typifying, as the Apostle tells us, the spiritual blessings which flow out

to a perishing world from a smitten Saviour), had at length failed them. Forgetting both the wrath under which their fathers had perished in the wilderness, and the mercy by which they were hitherto preserved, the gross-hearted people broke out with bitter complaints against God and his servant. This was too much, even for the meekness of Moses. He was stung to the quick by their ingratitude towards himself, and their stupid rebellion against his Master. Accordingly, when God told him to "speak to the rock before their eyes, and it should give forth water," instead of obeying the commandment implicitly and in the same spirit of long-suffering in which it was given, he, in his turn, broke out in bitter reproaches against the people. "Hear now, ye rebels," he exclaims; "must we fetch you water out of this rock?" And then, forgetting in his anger the commandment simply to *speak* to the rock, he *smote it with the rod.* Against this offense God's displeasure was immediately manifested. The voice from heaven declared that neither Moses nor Aaron, who had sanctioned his conduct, should lead the people into the promised land; they should both die upon its borders. Much has been said as to the precise nature of this offense, and the reason why it was followed by what seems to be so severe a punishment. It has been contended, with some plausibility, that the sin consisted partly in breaking in upon the designed analogy between the rock in Horeb and the spiritual rock, which is Christ. Once smitten by the rod of the great lawgiver, the rock was afterward to give water when it was only spoken to; thus dimly intimating what is afterwards so clearly revealed, that Christ once crucified under the law for

sin, dies no more, but is henceforth a fountain of living waters to be opened by the simple breath of prayer. Hence it is said that Moses, by disobeying the letter of God's command, marred the beauty of this typical revelation.

It is maintained also, with the same kind of plausibility, that the death of Moses has a much broader significance than as a mere punishment for his sin. The departure of the great lawgiver on the borders of Canaan and the triumphant entrance of the people under the leadership of Joshua (which is, by interpretation, Jesus), dimly foreshadows the transactions of the cross and the sepulchre ; when as the Great Prophet like unto Moses died, the Levitical system which he had established was finished and done away ; and as the second Joshua arose and ascended in triumph, the way was fully opened over death, the spiritual Jordan, into the heavenly Canaan. This explanation is plausible, and so far as it goes, probably true ; but it is not the chief lesson here written for our learning. The most solemn and instructive meaning of the record lies upon the surface. Moses sinned and the Lord punished him with death on the borders of the promised land. What could more strikingly illustrate in the eyes of all Israel the great truth, that stiff-necked people were so slow to learn, that God, though abundant in goodness, will by no means clear the guilty? Doubtless the record stands here before all ages, to teach the double lesson, that the weakest and best of men are subject to like passions with ourselves, and that God, in his holiness, will not overlook sin even in his favorite servants. There were unbelief and pride, and its twin sister, ungoverned anger, in the conduct of Moses. He should

not have felt for a moment that the rod in his hand was needful to verify the sure word of prophecy. He ought to have magnified the power and goodness of God before the people ; and if the master could afford patiently to bear with their rebellion, it was not for the servant to assume the office of avenger. Let the lesson never be forgotten. A holy Father laid the rod of discipline even on the back of Moses ; and, therefore, let not the Christian who has dwelt longest and the most intimately on the mount of communion, and served his master most faithfully during the longest life, suppose that he can commit the smallest sin without being rebuked by the Lord. The rebuke in the case of Moses was peculiarly severe.

2. *His death was attended with special aggravations.*

It was not merely the fact, which he so often and with such deep contrition confesses before the people, that the Lord was angry with him. It was not merely that the sentence of death so soon to be executed shocked the instinctive love of life which always grows stronger with increasing years, and must have been peculiarly strong in his undimmed eye and unabated strength. There were ties of peculiar tenderness which that sentence was about to sever. Moses was a true friend, and loved the people in whose service his life had been spent. He was a true patriot, and longed to see the prosperity of that people in their own land. He was a true man, and had all a man's natural desire to enjoy repose after years of toil, and to be crowned with the full success of a life-long enterprise. He had chosen to suffer affliction with the people of God ; and now having sacrificed for their sakes the

riches of Egypt, must he be excluded from their recompense of reward? Though he was old, according to the standard of those days, yet he had not attained to the years of the life of his fathers. Must he be cut down in his vigor, and in the height of his usefulness? Must the people for whom he had toiled with unfaltering affection for forty years, be deprived of his wisdom and example at this most important juncture of their history? Filled with such thoughts as these, Moses prostrated himself before God and prayed for the revocation of the bitter sentence. Like the great Intercessor whom he typified, he prayed earnestly that the cup might pass from him—saying "Oh, Lord, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness and thy mighty hand. I pray thee let me go over and see the goodly land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain and Lebanon." But it might not be; the decree is unalterable; and he who had so often interceded successfully for others, is denied the blessings he craves for himself. The Lord said, "Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah and behold it with thine eyes, for thou shalt not go over Jordan." Meekly and heroically the man of God submitted. Except only the sublime courage with which Jesus said, "Thy will be done," and rose up from prayer to gird himself for the coming conflict, there is not on record an example so glorious as that of Moses—calmly waiting and working during all the days of his appointed time. Though he may not share the people's triumph he does not "bate one jot of heart or hope" in their behalf. During nearly three years that elapsed from the utterance to the execution of the sentence, he filled his office with sleepless vigilance. The

knowledge that he must soon depart only made his zeal more earnest and tender. No opportunity was neglected and no means unemployed, by which his followers might be prepared for the inheritance from which he was cut off. As the appointed time approaches, he recounts in the great congregation all the dealings of the Lord. His doctrine drops as the rain, and distils as the dew in his farewell words. His whole soul is poured out in the blessing he pronounces upon the united nation and upon each individual tribe. And then having finished his work, he goes up with an unfaltering step and an undimmed eye, to that mysterious mountain top where he is to die alone with his God. There is an unparalleled moral grandeur in this closing act of his life. It is not merely a worthy end to his eventful career ; it stands alone and unequalled in that career. Not when he appeared before Pharaoh to deliver the mandates of the great *I am ;* nor when he poured out the plagues upon Egypt ; nor when his outstretched arm rolled the deadly waves over the hosts of the enemy ; nor when he came down from Sinai with his face all glowing from that divine communion ; never does he appear so sublime as when he goes up calmly "according to the word of the Lord," to that mysterious death and that unknown burial. I can imagine though I can find no adequate words to picture the scene. An event so long predicted and so carefully prepared for, could hardly occur without the knowledge of the people. I see the congregation of Israel swarming in the valley, from which the mighty Nebo goes up a rocky stairway into heaven. They stand with funereal silence with their eyes riveted on the familiar form of their great leader as he toils step by step and

hour by hour up the side of the mountain. His stature is erect, his step elastic ; and were it not for the bleached locks and venerable beard that shine like snow in the sunlight, no one might suppose that upright and vigorous traveler bears the burden of six score years. Hours pass away and still he presses on ; and still the straining eyes of the multitude are fixed upon him. The receding form grows smaller and smaller as they gaze. Now they can no longer discern his features as he turns to cast another, and yet another farewell look towards the tents of Israel. Now his limbs are undistinguishable—he seems like a bird, an insect, a speck on the side of the mountain. And now he has faded away entirely from their sight. The curtain has fallen before the drama of that wonderful life, just as the final catastrophe was approaching. Who shall describe the closing scene ? Who shall look behind that drapery of clouds through which the radiance of the declining sun streams in purple and gold, and reveal the secrets of that awfully magnificent deathbed? A mysterious and fearful thing it is, even when surrounded by the ministrations of friends, the good man gathers his feet up into the bed and yields up the ghost. Who can anticipate the tearing away of the soul from the embrace of the body, the freezing of these warm limbs, and the sealing up of these senses in the cold night of the grave, without an instinctive shudder ? Oh God, it is a fearful thing to die ! And yet would it not add much to the solemnity of this anticipation, if we could know that in our last moments, no wife or mother would bend over us to whisper words of comfort and catch our parting breath ; no friend follow us to our burial, or place one memorial

of affection upon our grave? Thus in the vigor of his life and usefulness, on the borders of that inheritance to which he had so long pressed forward, lonely and far away from all he had loved on earth, did Moses die.

3. *And yet, while it was attended with peculiar aggravations, his death had also its peculiar blessings!*

After all, was it not better for him to die like a true soldier with his harness on? What wise man would wish to outlive his active usefulness? Could his history have been as complete, and its closing scene as glorious if he had lived in Canaan till the evil days of tottering and weakness had come upon him? Is it certain or even probable that if he had been left to choose for himself he could have selected a more fitting time and place for his departure? True he was alone; and yet he was not alone, for the Father was with him. That mountain solitude was peopled by a more than human presence. He breathed his last on the bosom of his God, and underneath him were the everlasting arms. We may reasonably believe that there were no bonds in his death; no fever burning in his veins, no pains racking his joints, no disease slowly wasting his flesh. And we are sure that his soul was sustained and made joyful in his last hours, by visions that blended earth with heaven, amid which his life went down, not like the setting sun behind the clouded west, but like the morning star fading insensibly into the light of the perfect day. From the top of Nebo, as from a watch tower near the gate of heaven, God showed him all the rich inheritance of Israel. From the entrance of Hamath even to the river of Egypt, he beheld the fair land arrayed not only in its natural fruitfulness but in its historic

glory. His prophetic eye rested upon that "goodly mountain," where his own great antetype should reject the glory of this world's kingdoms and utterly vanquish the tempter ; and that other mountain where the light of both dispensations should be blended in the transfiguration of Messiah ; and that other mountain, where all the law and the prophets should be fulfilled in the sacrifice of the great Paschal Lamb. The same spirit that had revealed to him the secrets of creation spread out as in a map before him the glories of redemption. And then from this vision of earth, he looked up to the heavenly Canaan, and beheld those things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor heart conceived. Oh, how that Jordan faded away in contrast with the river of life ; how poor were those fruitful valleys compared with the gardens of God's delight ; and how joyfully did he give up this promised land, for a free entrance into the celestial paradise.

Who can doubt that the death of the great prophet, like his life, was thus distinguished by God's special favor ? And who can fail to learn from its contemplation, a lesson of cheerful hope ? We too, brethren, are condemned to die before we enter that land of promised contentment and plenty, to which we so fondly look forward. Never can we attain a satisfying inheritance here. From some lofty mount of anticipation we may see the rich land in the distance, but be sure we shall die upon the borders. God has so appointed. He has fixed the very time and place of our departure. But if we are indeed his, he has made these appointments in wisdom and in love. Let us learn to entertain pleasant thoughts of death. Terrible indeed it is to nature, but grace triumphs over

nature. Grace transforms the king of terrors into a messenger of peace ; when the body dissolves, grace gives the soul wings with which to flee away and be at rest. After all the pang is but momentary, but the glory that follows is eternal. It is but to wink and then see God. Wherefore, with this unalterable sentence of death upon you, work and wait like Moses till the appointed time ; and then when the summons comes go up to the appointed place, feeling assured that however lonely and mysterious, it shall be to you a mount of vision, from which you shall look down calmly on the fading beauty of earth, and then mount up with joy to the eternal glories of heaven.

II. THE BURIAL OF MOSES.

On this point the text contains one of the most remarkable statements in the Bible. It is not singular that his sepulchre should be unknown, which declaration is as true at this day as it was when the text was first written, notwithstanding the lying wonders of the monks of Mount Sinai. In this respect Moses shares the common lot of thousands. The sands of oblivion have covered the tombs of multitudes of earth's mightiest sons ; and every day men expire in the lone recesses of the forest, and go down uncoffined to the hidden depths of the sea. Indeed the whole earth is covered with unknown graves ; and if the trump of the resurrection should sound, the very dust whereon we tread, in places where we least think of death, would become instinct with life. But the remarkable part of the record is the declaration that *the Lord buried him !* Though he died far from all human ministration, yet his body was not left without the last honors of the

dead. It was laid with magnificent ceremonies in a sepulchre not made with hands. No doubt the last rites were performed by the ministrations of angels. The everlasting gates lifted up their heads that the radiant form of cherub and seraph might go forth to that funeral pomp. "The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire;" and the silence of those awful heights was ravished with floods of celestial melody. The sepulchre thus consecrated, though unknown to men, was committed to the guardianship of a mighty archangel; for "Michael contended with the devil about the body of Moses." Whatever dispute there may be about this mysterious statement of Jude, the plain record before us comes home to our heart with lessons of comfort and hope. God buried Moses, and Michael defended his tomb! What honor do these facts put upon the fondness with which we bend over our beloved as they lie cold, yet beautiful in death! It is natural and right that their flesh should be dear to us, for God esteems it precious. Amid the magnificent scenery of Nebo, he selected a secluded valley; and there he laid the remains of his servant, with the great mountain for his monument, and the everlasting stars for his funereal lamps, and all the beauty and riches of nature for the garniture of his tomb! Oh! what honor does this put upon the care with which we sculpture the marble, and plant sweet flowers by the graves of our beloved! And yet, at the same time, what comfort does it afford, if indeed we are denied the privilege of paying these honors to any of the departed! Does any one whose memory is precious to you lie upon a foreign shore in an unknown grave? Has the deep sea been to any one whom you love both

a death-bed and a tomb? Do not think their departure was uncheered, or their resting place unhonored because *you* were not there. But think of Moses, and say *the Lord buried him there!* The bodies of all his saints have angels to guard them! And oh! how safely are they kept! Fifteen hundred years after his mysterious burial, the body of Moses was brought forth, and gloriously arrayed, appeared with Jesus on that goodly mountain. And so the time is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man. This whole earth shall be a mountain of transfiguration; and there is not one who sleeps in Jesus but shall appear with him, having a white and glistering raiment and a countenance shining like the sun!

III. THE CHARACTER OF MOSES.

How simple, yet how comprehensive and weighty are the words of our text: "Moses the servant of the Lord was an hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated!" His was a long life, signalized at every step from the cradle of bulrushes in the Nile to the mysterious tomb on Nebo, by wonderful events; and developing in its progress the perfect proportions of a character unequalled except by one in the annals of the world.

Like nearly all great men, he was of humble parentage and born in troublous times. Yet by humble we do not mean ignorant, or ungodly parentage. They were Israelites indeed, trusting in God and waiting for the promised redemption. The mother's breast on which his infancy was nourished was warm not only with the love of a true woman, but with the faith of a

true believer. Her eyes were not dazzled by the splendors of the court into which she was so miraculously introduced. She felt that fine dress and gorgeous equipages, and sumptuous fare, are not the chief end of life. While she was the nurse of her child she was also his teacher, and fed his soul with the sincere milk of God's Word.

Fortified by such instructions, the mind of Moses was proof against the allurements of a forty years' residence in the Court of Egypt, and at the period of life when ambition is apt to be the strongest he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Soon after we find him a fugitive from the scenes of his youth and then a shepherd watching the flock of a stranger in a far country.

Let us not think this retirement or his lowly occupation unworthy his character and destiny. Like David, and John the Baptist, and Paul, and Christ, he was prepared by meditation in the wilderness for the part he was to fill in the world's history. There the spirit of inspiration was his teacher, and the Great I Am gave him his commission from the burning bush. We have not time to follow him in his marvellous career from that bush to the borders of Canaan: but looking over that history which is familiar to us all, we desire to ask what is the distinguishing feature of his life and character? What is it makes his record on high so glorious, and constitutes the chief element in his praise on earth? The text answers this question, and its simple testimony is most instructive. In summing up his life and character, and fixing to him the title which should ever after distinguish him, it does not say Moses the Great, the Conqueror of Egypt,

the Deliverer of Israel, the Lawgiver of Sinai; but simply and sublimely "Moses the Servant of the Lord." In all the elements of greatness he stands foremost among the heroes of antiquity. Among statesmen none ever wrought such barbarous materials into so perfect a commonwealth. No military leader ever conducted such a host through such a wilderness. No man of science ever looked so far into the secrets of nature or exerted like mastery over her powers. No historian has explored so thoroughly the mysteries of antiquity or left a record so perfect and enduring. But there is one comprehensive fact that blends all the traits of his character into symmetry and strength, explains all the signs and wonders that he wrought, epitomizes his whole career, and imparts an imperishable life to his name. He was the Servant of the Lord; his servant in the face of allurements and oppositions, the like of which have seldom compassed the path of man; his servant to the very end of life, laying his gray hairs on the same altar where he had consecrated the dew of life's morning a willing sacrifice.

Here is a lesson for the votaries of fame, who, unmindful of God, seek only the honor which cometh from men. The ambition that impels them to "live laboring days," is compounded of noble elements. But alas! that so much wealth of intellect and affection should be lavished on things that perish. Let them read in the history of the world upon every page, that fame's glorious beauty is a fading flower, soon to be bound and withered in the sheaf of the great reaper, death; and then beholding in Moses its living illustration, let this saying of God ring in their ears and burn upon their hearts: "Let not the wise man glory in his wis-

dom, nor the mighty man in his might; but let him that glorieth glory in this that he understandeth, and knoweth Me." To serve God is the true pathway to glory.

And is there not a lesson here for those who profess Christ's name, and who in the midst of a stirring business career, are longing and planning for the repose in which they may enjoy the fruits of their toil? Almost every man of business has a land of promise in the distance—a goodly land, watered with pure streams and shaded with vines and fig trees! He purposes to retire into some sweet valley of Canaan, where he shall find a full recompense for the toils of the wilderness. Now, I do not affirm that such anticipations are all evil, or that it is under all circumstances wrong to realize them. A man may retire from successful business with an honest purpose to use his gains for the glory of God, and everywhere he may find opportunities to work for his Master. But I do say that the idea of a *perfect repose* in this world is a mere dream of foolish and indolent human nature. And the modified anticipation of retirement from worldly cares for the purpose of doing good, is in almost every case "a hope deferred that makes sick the heart;" even when it is not a self-deception, by which men postpone the claims of present duty. Amid the uncertainties that attend such anticipations let me commend to you a certain and more glorious scheme; even the scheme of devoting the fruits of a life-long toil to the service of God, not to be blazoned in a splendid will or monumentalized of some great public trust which the pride and villainy of men will pervert; but by consecrating a full proportion of them as fast as they ripen. Let me say to young men, and

especially to those who are engaged in successful business, banish this idea of making enough for yourself and then resting to enjoy it—'tis a mean, shrivelled, un-Christian idea; and embrace the higher and holier purpose of working all your life for God's cause. Begin now and continue till your last day to gather silver and gold and social influence into the Lord's treasury. Be willing to die on Mount Nebo, if your closing eye may be cheered by the prospect of great prosperity in the Church: a prospect made certain by your liberality and faithfulness till death. No danger that a man who goes to work in such a spirit will ever come to want, or fail of a large success. God will bless him in basket and in store. And if he live many years, his last days shall be genial and fruitful. If, indeed, your old age is to be querulous and dissatisfied, clinging with desperate fondness to this world's goods, and having no heart interest in the life beyond,—then we should say, *Go*—retire to some far country—leave your merchandize and seek among the pure works of God to keep some green spot in your heart. There are more than enough such old men in the Church and in the marts of trade; and as they stand clutching the purse-strings like another Judas, and mingling their complaints like a second Nabal with the counsels of God's people,—Satan chuckles over them,—saying, "See how the boasted love of Christ grows cold with years—see how these professed heirs of heaven hold on to the world the nearer they come to their inheritance!"

But O, if you may have an old age like Moses, and, thank God, like many to whom Israel in these days rises up in the gate to do honor; if as wealth increases you might impart it more liberally to every good enter-

prise ; if as you draw near to Mount Nebo your interest in the Church might grow, and your love for God's people become more tender ; then, your presence shall be as a pillar of fire in the wilderness ; the minister who loves you in your young manhood will cling to and lean upon you more fondly as you grow old together, and children of the covenant yet unborn will rise up to bless your memory.

IV. THE PUBLIC ESTIMATION OF MOSES.

We allude under this head, more particularly to the expressions of love and sorrow which followed his death. "And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days." The whole nation united in doing honor to the memory of the departed. If there were any who had opposed and spoken evil of him during his life, now that he was gone, their enmity was disarmed. Every man felt bereaved and joined in the universal expression of sorrow. Right it is thus to mourn over the death of the great and good. Their departure is a grievous loss, for the world has but few to whose character men may look for an example, and in whose life they may feel an honest pride. Moreover such mourning embalms their example and influence in the hearts of the people, and by their cherished memorials, they being dead, yet speak. The memory of a nation's great and good men constitute its peculiar treasures. It is the great stimulus to enterprise and virtue ; and above all, by the common interest they excite, such memories are the great bond of fraternal union. It was so among the people of Israel. Next to their apostacy from God, the great danger that threatened their peace and prosperity, was alienation

from each other. When they should be settled in separate and to some extent independent sovereignties, and different pursuits and social relations should have worked out the natural results in their character; there was great danger that they would wax proud and break the bond of fraternity. Moses foresaw and cautioned them with his dying words against this peril. And we say that next to his precepts, his own memory was the most powerful preventive. They all gloried in him; his fame was their common inheritance. And when five centuries after they were separated into two bands, the name of Moses and the fondness with which they clung to his memory, kept them from becoming utterly estranged. We think it will be no digression from the spirit of this discourse to intimate how this example applies to us in our civil relations. I deem it no presumption to institute a comparison between the deliverer of Israel and that modern Moses, who led our fathers through the wilderness of war to the borders of our goodly heritage; at whose tomb the affections of our whole country center and mingle with filial fondness. As, while those twelve States of Israel dwelt peaceably together in their glorious confederation, the last counsels of their deliverer were at once their pride and the bond of their union; as when in an evil hour Ephraim began to vex Judah, and Judah, Ephraim, the heart of the true Israelite turned mournfully to the memory of those better counsels and more glorious days; so should we be bound together by the memory of our great leader; and if it ever comes to the worst and the strife of brotherhood writes Ichabod on the shattered memorials of our country's glory (which, God

forbid), so shall some of us turn to read and blot his farewell words with a patriot's tears!

There is yet another reflection suggested by this record. "And so," says the text, "the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended." Of course this does not mean that the people ceased at the expiration of a month to feel their loss and cherish the memory of the departed. It only means they ceased from the public and formal expression of their sorrow. They had spent thirty days on the borders of their inheritance in these funereal rites. They had given full expression to that grief which would still abide in many a soul, but which ought not to hinder them from the real enjoyments and duties of life. They have other employments than to linger weeping on the banks of Jordan. The wants of their children, the cherished hopes of the land of promise, the claims of their glorious destiny are pressing upon them. Joshua, their new leader, puts off his sackcloth and girds on his armor and calls on them to go forward.

Here then is a lesson for us. It can never be the chief business of our life to weep and lament. There must be a limit to such mourning as unfits us to go bravely forward in the performance of duty. The afflicted soul may be allowed the comely expression of his grief, and while the sorrow is fresh, a merciful Father will not be offended if he sits down for a while to its indulgence. But there is no virtue and there may be much sin in grief. The sooner he can rise and gird himself, and say with David, "Wherefore should I mourn?" the better for his own comfort and the more likely is he to secure God's favor. Indeed it is one of the blessed provisions made for our comfort that the very

effort to put a cheerful courage on, after a little time, softens affliction, and almost transfigures it into joy. It is not that the memory of the departed is forgotten. Oh, no! though the household may grow in numbers and in loveliness, the absent child still comes back daily to the parent's heart; and often amid the busiest scenes, the bright face and sweet voice of one far away mingles with their thoughts. But as time rolls on, the vision becomes more and more sweet and welcome, gradually losing the lineaments of earth, and putting on an angel's garb. The new grave that is so barren and repulsive to-day, will be covered by another spring with green sod and fragrant flowers. Birds will sing and build their nests there. The morning and evening light will glance softly upon it, until it becomes an attractive spot. And thus, too, the affliction that garnered the precious dust in its bosom, shall be mellowed in the distance till it becomes a pleasant memory. All over these fields of time "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Grief itself scatters the germs of joyful anticipation. This slumbering dust is but the seed corn of the resurrection harvest. These days of absence are but the needful preparation for an eternal reunion. There the affinities of the new-born soul shall be fully developed and gratified in the vision of God. There, too, the sanctified affections of earth shall be renewed and intensified in a fellowship, amid whose joys it shall be said in a higher and truer sense, "and so the days of their weeping and mourning were ended."

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